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Seeking artists interested in the Arts in Healthcare

Are you a visual artist or musician living in Montana who has in interest in the Arts in Healthcare?

The Montana Arts Council is mulling over an idea and needs know who might be interested in training, workshops and creating a community of practice with others who are working, or would like to work, in healthcare or eldercare and even lifelong learning settings.

Please send a brief bio with contact information (500 words), telling us something about who you are, what you do in the arts, and a bit about how or why this field is of interest to you. Please send responses to: Kim Baraby Hurtle, Montana Arts Council, khurtle@mt.gov, or P.O. Box 202201, Helena, MT 59620-2201.

ARTS IN HEALTHCARE

In Good Company

Medical directors and legal eagles show interest in collecting art

By Daniel Grant
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The corporate acquisition of art may have reached its zenith in the corridors of Manhattan and other big-city financial institutions back in the 1980s and 1990s. After a large number of brokerages went belly-up after the latest financial meltdown, the world of corporate collecting has shifted its vantage point. It's no longer pinstripe-suited bankers and wolves of Wall Street who are accruing artwork. Rather, it is the men and women who are immersed in the expanding medical field.

the Cleveland Clinic purchase their work, she remarks. They keep all these submissions filed, to be reviewed when a new opportunity to decorate a space opens up.

The art team has no fixed acquisitions budget, and money is allotted to them for purchases when there is renovation or a new building, in the manner of a public Percent-for-Art program. The more than 5,000 works in its overall collection (in addition to 10,000 or so posters) represents a substantial investment.

The Cleveland Clinic art collection is of

Framing what an art advisor does

Abstract art, representational ceiling-hung sculptures, floor-based installations, paintings, photographs, and prints all are part of the mix that defines many corporate art collections. Nudes and artwork that may directly challenge political and social norms tend to be the only outcasts.

"Art in offices enriches the lives of the people who work there," stresses Laura Solomon, an art advisor in New York City.

Solomon helps her clients purchase artwork by visiting galleries, art fairs, and artists' studios in order to find appropriate pieces. Then she makes a formal presentation of potential purchases to a committee or to an individual, negotiating the prices and arranging for its transportation to its new home.

Solomon will even take charge of framing or installing pieces in the offices. She gladly rotates existing artworks around the offices from the collection, and sometimes puts together special exhibitions from it.

Like many advisors, Solomon has taken on the role of outside curator, since fewer and fewer corporations have in-house staff devoted exclusively to buying and managing the art. Many companies, in fact, prefer using outside consultants – they find expertise via members of the Association of Professional Art Advisors (APAA). Additionally, some advisors are not APAA members but rather work as gallery owners and offer their assistance to private and corporate clients.

Art reflects a company's attitude

A number of Solomon's clients are law firms, which tend to want "not a high-budget collection but a high-energy collection." She fulfills that goal by focusing on emerging and mid-career artists.

One of her clients, Bijan Amini, is a partner in the Manhattan-based law firm Storch, Amini and Munves. "I haven't ever spent more than \$100,000 for anything," he says. "Most of the pieces are in the range of \$5,000 or \$10,000."

He doesn't know what his employees think about the art that decorates the offices (he never has asked), although the firm's controller "tells me it's a big waste of money."

"I don't think so," he says. "I think the art helps productivity, and it keeps the place from looking drab. Many of my clients own private jets, and they expect to see works of art. They want to feel it's an expensive office, so I think the art helps the business. Plus, I get pleasure just from looking at the art, and that's worth something."

"An office shows the thinking of the corporation," explains Miami art advisor Lisa Austin. "If the artwork is old, clients think, 'These people haven't changed their thinking in 30 years, and probably not just about art.'"



"Constellation II" is part of Mount Nittany Medical Center's Shaner Cancer Pavilion, located in Pennsylvania. Artist Talley Fisher says that the piece represents how "the sky shines with stars that calm the spirit and reveal a touch of wonder."

(Photo by Talley Fisher)

Taking the temperature

"The health care industry is growing, and hospitals see the value of art and creating spaces that are more pleasant," states Talley Fisher, a sculptor in Bellefonte, PA. Fisher and her firm, Rob Fisher Sculpture LLC, have been commissioned to create large installations for an impressive number of facilities stretching from Pennsylvania to Indiana to Florida to California. In fact, one of the healthcare facilities, Mount Nittany Medical Center, has its own endowment for the purpose of acquiring artwork.

Fisher notes that she does not promote herself directly to these healthcare institutions, but rather aims her marketing efforts toward art advisors, who usually are brought in to help find artworks for companies.

A world-class collection

Perhaps, the healthcare industry's largest art collector is the Cleveland Clinic, which has a number of locations in Ohio, as well as in Canada, Florida, Nevada, and Abu Dhabi. In art terms, the eight community hospitals and 16 family health centers represent 23 million square feet of wall space. A seven-member art team is responsible for acquiring art in all media and styles to fill wall and atrium spaces.

"I go to art fairs – the Venice Biennale, Miami Basel, Freeze, the Chicago Art Fair, the Armory Show, and some others – and to gallery and museum exhibitions all over," says Joanne Cohen, executive director and chief curator of the art collection. For the facilities in Abu Dhabi and Las Vegas, Cohen and her staff work with art advisors on finding appropriate artwork, but otherwise, they pick works on their own.

"We're deluged with mail and e-mail" from art dealers and artists who want to have

such note that regular tours are offered (in Arabic, English and Spanish), and those with no health concerns, but rather a healthy interest in art, "come here before the Cleveland Museum of Art is open," she says.

The primary beneficiaries of the art, however, are the patients, their families, and visitors who all claim on the periodic surveys that the clinic performs that the art environment "helps with healing and mood, reduces stress levels and the experience of pain. Patients who feel less pain may be more motivated to get out of bed, possibly because they want to look at the art," Cohen says.

How can you break into this competitive arena?

Getting one's work into a corporate art collection generally involves knowing whom to contact and how to contact that person. While it may be a top executive (or an appointed committee) that makes the final decisions concerning what to buy and where to place it, usually there is someone given the task of finding appropriate art and making a presentation to that person or group.

"Corporations like the idea of a professional arm's-length acquisition, so they look for someone like me," says Emily Nixon, a Chicago-based art advisor who was instrumental in building numerous corporate art collections, including that of accounting firm Arthur Andersen. (Its collection of 2,000 works by contemporary artists was sold in its entirety after the company filed for bankruptcy.)

Nixon, too, receives numerous communications from artists, but she tends to rely less on submissions from people she has never heard of and more through personally visiting art gallery exhibitions, art fairs and auctions, and receiving recommendations from people (artists, dealers, auctioneers) with whom she has had a longtime association.

The artists who are of greatest interest to her "should be in a gallery and have had numerous sales." It doesn't hurt if these artists have sold work in the past to other corporations, although that is less

significant than the fact that they are represented in a gallery.

It is important, therefore, for artists to identify who is a particular company's in-house curator or outside art advisor. The International Directory of Corporate Art Collections is a good source of information on the largest collectors. At \$115, it is an expensive purchase, but many public and university library reference departments have them on their shelves.

Many, although not all, art advisors are members of the Association of Professional Art Advisors (www.artadvisors.org), which provides information on, and links to, its members whose own websites and identify the companies for which they have done work.

Remember that the companies that are most likely in the market for artwork are physically expanding, building a new facility, or are just relocating. It would be wise to follow the financial trade journals and magazines to see what companies are doing just that.

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